



inTouch

April 2006

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Arab American Heritage Month

To celebrate Arab American Heritage Month, County Executive Douglas M. Duncan, the Office of Community Outreach, the Department of Public Libraries, the Multicultural Library Advisory Committee, Friends of the Library and several Arab American community organizations will sponsor a number of events to recognize the rich cultural traditions of the Arab world and to highlight the contributions that Arab Americans continue to make to American society.

With a population of over 3 million in the United States and close to 10,000 in Montgomery County, the Arab American community has been instrumental in improving the lives of all Americans. Some prominent Arab Americans in US history include Helen Thomas, the "Dean" of the White House Press Corps; former U.S. Senator George Mitchell; radio personality Casey Kasem; former HHS Secretary Donna Shalala; professional football star Doug Flutie.

In Maryland, Arab Americans in prominent positions include Assistant Attorney General Laila Atallah; Randa Fahmy Hudome who has chaired the Maryland Commission for Women and Michele Forzley who serves on the Maryland Sister States Committee.

To celebrate Arab American Heritage Month, which is designated as April of each year, Public Libraries will host an ongoing art exhibit highlighting Arabic art. Open to the public at no cost, the display will run until April 29, 2006 in the Rockville Library, located at 99 Maryland Avenue.

On April 4, the County Executive and the Office of Community Outreach sponsored a community reception and presentations by two prominent Arab Americans. The Honorable Rose Mary Oakar, President of the American Arab Anti Discrimination Committee, spoke on the role that her organization has played in promoting fairness and equity in media coverage of the Arab world and of Arab Americans. Mrs. Oakar represented the Cleveland area of Ohio in the U.S. House of Representatives. Mr. Nidal Ibrahim, Executive Director, Arab American Institute also spoke of the prominent role that Arab Americans are playing in the civic affairs across the United States. . AAI provides materials and sponsors programs to help educate all Americans on the background, history and contributions of Arab Americans. Montgomery County was recognized as the only county in the United States to designate the entire month to celebrate Arab American heritage.

Tina Clarke Inducted to Human Rights Hall of Fame

On March 19, 2006, Montgomery County's Office of Human Rights inducted 13 civil rights pioneers into the Human Rights Hall of Fame. All the inductees are former or current residents of Montgomery County. One honoree was Tina Clarke, the County Executive's liaison to the African American/Black community. The Human Rights Hall of Fame was established to recognize the courage, altruism, visionary leadership, outstanding achievements and personal sacrifice that inductees had displayed in their continuing fight to ensure for all Americans the principles of freedom, justice and equality under law.



TINA CLARKE

The inductees were nominated by the community and selected by a panel of distinguished judges – all of whom are prominent civil rights advocates themselves. In addition to Tina, this year's Fame inductees were Noah E. Clarke (Tina's grandfather), Hyman Cunin, Emily C. Edmonson, Hugh G. Gallagher, Lee Jordan, Shirley S. Lynne, Michael S. Morris, Anita Neal Powell, George H. Sealey, John W. Smith, F. Wilson Wims and Harvey Zeigler.

The names of the inductees will be inscribed on a plaque and placed on a sculpture created in 2000 by Lalrozami Henkai, who was then a student at Montgomery College. The sculpture and plaque are on permanent display in the lobby of the Executive Office Building in Rockville. For more information about the Office of Human Rights, call (240) 777-8450.

On Saturday, April 22, the Libraries will sponsor a family program to highlight Arabic culture. The event features story telling, traditional henna hand painting, arts and craft. Also at no cost, this event is for all ages. It runs from 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. in the Gaithersburg Library, 18330 Montgomery Village Avenue. For more information about all the special events, call Ms. Yuli Estler at (240) 777-0024.

Message from the County Executive



DOUGLAS M. DUNCAN

Dear Friends,

During the past few weeks as I prepared the County's operating budget for Fiscal Year 2007 – my last as County Executive – I took great pride and satisfaction in knowing that the budget reflects the priorities of our community and that I am delivering on the promises I have made. Each of my budgetary decisions was made with one goal in mind: to improve the lives of our residents. Although priorities for each year change, making lives better for all residents has been the core principle for each budget I have prepared, whether as Mayor of Rockville or as County Executive of Maryland's largest and most diverse jurisdiction.

While proposing the largest reduction in property tax rates in 16 years, the FY2007 operating budget also reflects my continued commitment to issues that are of paramount importance to Montgomery County residents.

Education is First. Montgomery County is living proof that investments in schools will yield better jobs, safer streets and stronger communities. The \$2.2 billion education budget expands all-day kindergarten to every elementary school in the County, increases support for special education students, freezes tuition at Montgomery College and adds school-based health centers and services to more schools in the County. School construction projects will be kept on schedule, which includes the construction of health centers for students at the new facilities.

Affordable and accessible health care is a concern for everyone. For uninsured families in our County, I have doubled the funding in our healthcare system to provide services these families would otherwise not receive. Traffic congestion is another issue that affects everyone in Montgomery County. I have proposed a 21% increase for mass transit. Over 80 million dollars are also being committed to accelerating road projects.

I have dedicated half a billion dollars to improve safety in our community. The budget includes adding over 200 new public safety positions, deploying new technology, buying more vehicles and procuring the most advanced equipment – all designed to ensure safety and protection for our residents.

Lastly, I recognize that government does not act alone. We must partner with organizations that have knowledge and familiarity with the many diverse communities in Montgomery County to help provide access for families and individuals. My budget recommendations expand the County's community grants to organizations that provide health care, education, technology and support for our residents.

I want to thank the people of Montgomery County for providing assistance and guidance during the past decade in helping identify and define the priorities of our community and in helping to make Montgomery County a great place to live, work, play, raise a family and grow a business.

Sincerely,

Douglas M. Duncan
County Executive

Douglas M. Duncan, County Executive
Bruce Romer, Chief Administrative Officer
Fariba Kassiri, Assistant CAO

Office of Community Outreach:

Debbie Resnick, Manager

Shu-Ping Chan, Asian Pacific American Liaison

Tina Clarke, African American/Black Liaison

Joe Heiney-Gonzalez, Latino/Hispanic Liaison

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Submissions, comments and event announcements can be emailed to: InTouch@montgomerycountymd.gov. Those received by the first of March, June, September or December will be considered for the next issue of *In Touch*. Articles may be reproduced or translated into other languages with attribution.

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Office of Consumer Protection Created

Investigator for Hispanic Community Hired

To help protect residents from falling victim to unscrupulous business practices and fast emerging areas of fraud such as identity theft and internet scams, County Executive Douglas M. Duncan has opened the County's new Office of Consumer Protection (OCP) and announced the hiring of a Latino investigator who will specialize in consumer protection issues impacting the Latino community.

The new office results from legislation sponsored by County Council Member Tom Perez. OCP is now a freestanding agency reporting directly to the County Executive and the Chief Administration Officer. Previously, it was housed in the Department of Housing and Community Affairs (HCA). Eric Friedman, who headed the office under HCA, was named acting director for OCP.

"Protecting consumers from unscrupulous businesses is a top priority," said Duncan. "Creating a separate consumer protection office will give this issue greater visibility and help us in the fight against unfair business practices."



LORENA BAILEY

The new Latino investigator is Lorena Bailey, who comes to Montgomery County after five years with the Legal Aid Bureau in Baltimore where she counseled clients in consumer matters including debt collection, predatory

lending, contract disputes and other consumer related issues. Ms. Bailey holds a BS degree from Cornell University and a law degree from Georgetown University Law Center. Her legal and bilingual skills will be a valuable addition to OCP.

OCP is a law enforcement office providing complaint resolution, consumer education, licensing and advocacy. OCP investigates thousands of complaints each year involving automotive sales and repairs, new home purchases, home improvements, credit issues, retail sales, internet services and many other consumer transactions. OCP provides pre-purchase information to consumers and provides speakers to community groups to help educate residents on emerging consumer issues. For more information, call (240) 777-3636 or visit

www.montgomerycountymd.gov/consumer.



Fariba Kassiri was recently appointed Assistant Chief Administrative Officer to fill the vacancy left by Parker Hamilton, who is now Director of Public Libraries. Fariba served as Chief of the Division of Environmental Policy and Compliance in the Department of Environmental Protection. She came to Montgomery County in 2004 from Prince George's County, where she spent four years as Special Advisor to the Chief Administrative Officer.

Taste of Wheaton Scheduled for May 21

On Sunday, May 21 from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Wheaton area restaurants and businesses will host the 2006 Taste of Wheaton event.

Over 25 Wheaton restaurants are participating in this day-long festival featuring food, children's rides and live music. Admission to the event and children's rides are free. Tickets for food samplings from the area's many restaurants are available at \$1 each. This year's entertainment offering features Tommy Lepson and Latin Band Sin Meido.

Wheaton is home to many dining establishments that feature cuisines from all over the world. For over 10 years, this has been a must-attend event for those who love exciting and diverse dining opportunities. With over 800 businesses located in and near downtown Wheaton, this area has seen a great revitalizing in recent years and now attracts customers from across Montgomery County and the region.

The event is located at Reedy Drive and Granview Avenue, across the street from the Westfield Wheaton Mall. Free parking is available at the public parking garages at the mall and at the County's Ennalls Avenue garage. The public is urged to use public transportation. For more information, call the events line at (240) 777-8115.



Profile: **David R. Baker** Police Community Outreach

Police Chief J. Thomas Manger is a strong advocate of community policing. Knowing the residents, communities, businesses and neighborhoods they serve, police officers are able to do their jobs more effectively in solving crimes and assisting victims. More importantly, strong community policing efforts help residents and business owners learn about strategies to avoid crimes from occurring in the first place.

The Community Outreach Section of the Department of Police proactively works with residents to establish relationships, trust and positive partnerships to help ensure safety and improve the quality of life for everyone in Montgomery County. Capt. James Fenner heads the division that covers the Community Outreach Section, which also offers courses in a civilian police academy for residents to learn more about police work. Capt. Fenner also supervises the sections that provide outreach activities for seniors and youth.

Police officers respond to a wide range of calls. Their lives are on the line everyday in responding to calls that can involve a major crime or a minor dispute between neighbors. Because of the high volume of calls that patrol officers respond to, the Community Outreach Section often follows up in situations where more information, mediation or greater relationship building is needed to help resolve lingering issues among residents and communities.

David R. Baker started with the Community Outreach Section in 1993 after working in the County's Department of Liquor Control for almost 10 years. One of Dave's major responsibilities is serving as the County's dedicated Hate Crimes Coordinator.

Because of the psychological chill that hate crimes have on entire communities, hate crimes resonate well beyond the targeted victims. Hate crimes are illegal acts that harm a person or property that are specifically committed because of an individual's or group's real or perceived membership in any one of five protected categories: race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion or handicap status.

On the whole, reported hate crimes have decreased in recent years in Montgomery County. However, police still face the issue of under-reporting among victims who may not be familiar with the police or may face language or cultural barriers. This is where police community outreach is most critical.

The largest reported category is religious hate crimes that cover acts of vandalism at schools or houses of worship that include graffiti depicting symbols or

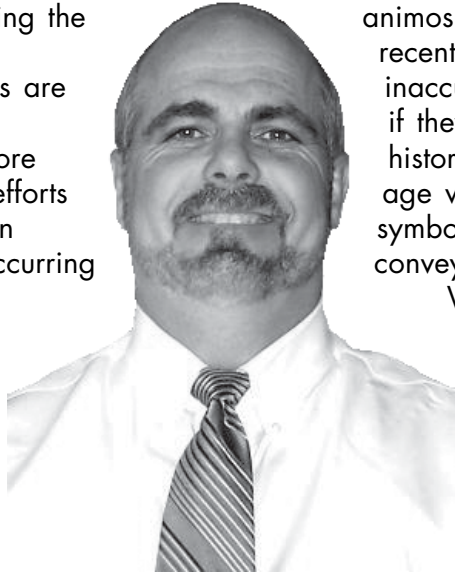
messages that have historical connections to animosity against particular religions. In some recent incidents, these symbols have been inaccurately drawn, leading Dave to wonder if they may carry new meanings outside their historical context, especially in the internet age where perpetrators of hate crimes view symbols on websites and borrow them to convey new messages.

Websites also pose a new challenge to police as some hate groups now reorganize under the "lone wolf" model to avoid connection to the group's leaders. By posting information on websites, leaders of hate groups provide the means and encourage perpetrators to commit illegal acts, which are often extremely violent, while

maintaining distance between themselves and the actual crimes. This phenomenon arose after the Southern Poverty Law Center won a civil suit against a group that encouraged members to commit hate crimes. The judgment from the lawsuit bankrupted the group and its leaders.

Although widely known as the County's dedicated coordinator for statistics and trends on hate crimes, Dave's job encompasses much more. Police community outreach provides information on residential and business crime prevention strategies, diversity training at the police academy for in-service officers, safety checks for homes and businesses, crime prevention through environmental design, preventing violence in the workplace and a whole array of related issues that help improve the sense of safety and security for residents and business owners. Dave is also responsible for activating the Hate Crimes Tipster Fund. The Community Outreach Section also works closely with Luis Cardona, the County's Gang Prevention Task Force coordinator.

Because of his knowledge, experience and expertise, most people do not realize that Dave is not a police officer, even by those who nominate Dave for police association honors that usually are awarded to sworn officers. Dave wins the respect of his colleagues by initiating respect, listening well, learning fast and displaying the professionalism needed to succeed in a department where almost 80 percent of the employees are sworn officers. Dave lives with his wife, both realtors, in a century-old house in the Braddock Heights section of Frederick. In his spare time, Dave likes to work around the home and create paintings and other artworks when not buying or selling properties on weekends. For more information on the Police Department's Community Outreach Section, call (301) 840-2585.



DAVID R. BAKER

County Executive Receives Four Community Awards

Montgomery County Executive Douglas M. Duncan has recently accepted four awards for the services he has provided to the community. He feels honored with the recognition and hopes that the progress he has made will provide a solid foundation for the years ahead.

Mr. Duncan received a "Bridge Builder Award" from Partners for Livable Communities for his support of the Crossway Community, Inc. This program provides integrated educational and support services to as many as 1,500 families in the area. One of its main objectives is reaching out and assisting young, single mothers, as well as their children. "I strongly believe in the power of education to transform lives and improve communities", Duncan said. When Crossway Community was renovating an abandoned school in Kensington, Montgomery County supported the project with financial aid and technical assistance. The end result was a 14 acre campus complete with a playground, fields, thirty housing units, classrooms, a Neighborhood Learning Center, and the Crossway Community Montessori School. "I'm proud of the success that Montgomery County partnership with Crossway community has had in building effective, prevention-based social service programs that work for families who need them most," said Duncan. "[It] is the key to eliminating future social ills."

The American Lung Association of Maryland presented Duncan with the 2005 Jack Lodge Award to credit his fine leadership in promoting good health in Montgomery County. "Protecting our residents from harmful effects of tobacco use, including the hazards of second-hand smoke, has been a top priority of mine," Duncan said. "I am honored to receive this award." Duncan has provided smoke-free environments in restaurants and workplaces. He has lobbied in Annapolis for a statewide ban on vending machines that offer tobacco products in hopes of decreasing sales to underage users. Enforcement laws were also passed to help reduce purchase of tobacco by minors. In November 2000, Duncan signed a legislation that required all cigarettes and tobacco products on sale to be stored in secure locations, out of children's reach.

On January 16, 2006, at the annual Day of Service and Tribute, Duncan was given the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Humanitarian Award. Its purpose is to recognize an individual each year who has dedicated time and effort in spreading Dr. King's principles and virtues. By advocating for equality and camaraderie, Duncan had caught the attention the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Commemorative Committee, who presented him this distinguished award.

At a reception in Temple Beth Ami of Rockville, the Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Washington (JCRC) honored Duncan for his decade of support in the Jewish community. The JCRC credited the Montgomery county Executive for his outspokenness against anti-Semitism and hate crimes. Duncan was also praised for increasing funding for education, making health care more accessible, and doubling spending on affordable housing. "I appreciate the Jewish community's recognition of my efforts to promote an inclusive community in Montgomery county- one that draws strength from its cultural, religious, and racial differences," he said. "It is multiculturalism that makes us stronger, more vibrant, and a better place to live and work".

Energy Assistance Available

County Executive Douglas M. Duncan recently announced that nearly 22,000 households in the County that qualify for the Refundable Earned Income Credit (EIC) program will receive a one-time payment of \$50 to help pay for rising energy costs. Maryland Comptroller William Donald Schaefer and the Executive presented the first check together to Silver Spring resident Aster Tefera.

The cash assistance is being provided through a one-time, \$50 rebate to individuals who already qualify for the County's Earned Income Credit (EIC) program. Montgomery's Earned Income Credit program—the nation's first local program—was signed into law in October 1999 and provides eligible taxpayers with a local refund that will match the amount they receive through the Maryland Refundable Earned Income Credit.

Funding comes from the County, but the program is administered by the Comptroller's office. More than 200,000 Maryland taxpayers received the State's Refundable Earned Income Credit last year. Taxpayers may be eligible for Maryland's Refundable EIC if their Earned Income Credit exceeds their Maryland tax liability. The refund to the taxpayer may be up to 20 percent of the federal earned income tax credit. Taxpayers are encouraged to visit the Comptroller's website at www.marylandtaxes.com for more information.

"Doug is a man with a heart," said Comptroller Schaefer. "The \$50 will help keep those in need a little warmer." The Executive also urged Montgomery County residents to seek financial help through the County's Office of Home Energy Programs. For more information about the County's energy assistance programs, which includes the Maryland Energy Assistance Program (MEAP) and the Electric Universal Service Program, please call 240-777-4450 or go to www.montgomerycountymd.gov and click on "Home Energy Assistance."



County Executive Douglas M. Duncan was joined by **Maryland Comptroller William Donald Schaefer** to present a \$50 rebate check to Silver Spring resident Aster Tefera. The one-time checks, being mailed to nearly 22,000 County households that qualify for Montgomery County's refundable earned income tax credit program, are part of Duncan's effort to help low-income families pay for rising home heating costs.

Employee Associations Reflect Diversity of Workforce

Reflecting the diversity of the community and employees, Montgomery County supports a range of associations designed to assist and enhance the professional development of County employees. The associations work to ensure equality in the workplace, promote cultural understanding, provide job and benefits information and enhance relations between employees and the County.

The African American Employees Association (AAEA) was founded in the mid-1970s under the name Minority Employees Association. In 1990, the name was changed to honor the heritage of the association's members. AAEA is a nonprofit organization committed to improving the skills and effectiveness of Montgomery County employees through its programs and initiatives. The association provides professional development opportunities, supports Montgomery County's diversity initiatives and works with the County's departments and agencies to increase employment and promotional opportunities and to eliminate artificial barriers. Contact Ken Taylor, AAEA President, at (240) 777-5743.

The Asian Pacific American Employees Association (APAEA) works to bring together employees of Asian or Pacific Islander heritage. The group promotes educational opportunities for all employees to learn about the diversity within the Asian Pacific American community. By sponsoring educational programs and community projects, APAEA provides assistance and mentoring to all employees on skills for career advancement, communications and advocacy. Contact Chuck Crisostomo, APAEA President, at (240) 777-8416 or visit www.apaea.org.

The Gay, Lesbian or Bisexual Employees Association (GLOBE) aims to ensure equality for all employees. Its purpose is to unite gay, lesbian or bisexual employees of Montgomery County and communicate their needs and concerns. The organization's membership is open to any one supporting these objectives. Founded in 1998, GLOBE was originally formed to pursue health benefits for same sex couples. In 2000 GLOBE achieved that objective. The association now focuses on providing representation in County forums for its members. Working to promote equality, GLOBE has participated in diversity day celebrations and promotes greater understanding of the gay, lesbian and bisexual community. Contact Reginald Jetter, President and founding member of GLOBE, at (240) 777-6275 for more information.

The mission of the Montgomery County Government Hispanic Employees Association (MCGHEA) is to advocate for programs and services that promote the well-being of Montgomery County's Hispanic/Latino employees and their communities. MCGHEA is dedicated to providing services that both educate and benefit its membership and all employees. The association is involved in organizing Hispanic heritage events, diversity celebrations as well as in the offering of trainings for career advancement. MCGHEA played a big role in establishing the language pay differential for all County employees who speak other languages in addition to English. Call Luis Martinez, MCGHEA Interim President, at (240) 777-1864.

The Montgomery County Retired Employees' Association (MCREA) was formed in 1977 to provide information and advocate on issues relating to retired County employees and their spouses. Membership is open to all individuals retired from the County and who also participate in the County's retirement system. MCREA works closely with the Office of

Human Resources benefits team on issues relating to insurance and other defined benefits for retirees. The association represents about 4,000 individuals who have retired from any of the three branches of County government, including former judges and elected officials. For more information, contact Suzanne Hudson at (301) 946-0571 or visit www.mcrea.net.

Telephone Hotlines to Access Departments

Over 34,000 Calls to HHS Hotline in First Year, Library reference now available 24/7

Montgomery County has established telephone hotlines for a number of departments and agencies to provide greater access to services and information for all residents. Some hotlines are staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Others direct callers to a staff member during normal business hours and allow callers to leave a message for next day callback during off hours.

For example, the Emergency Communications Center staffs the 911 hotline at all hours to respond to calls for police, fire or medical emergencies. The Police Department also maintains a hotline for non-emergency situations.

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) recently celebrated the first anniversary of its hotline. This resource has been highly successful, as over 34,000 calls were taken during the first year of service, or an average of approximately 130 calls per day. The HHS hotline provides information and links residents to a wide array of information on health care, child care and social services.

The Community Use of Public Facilities (CUPF) is the agency responsible for booking and renting County owned meeting rooms, auditoriums, gymnasiums and other space in County facilities, including schools, libraries, regional service centers and space in the Executive and Council office buildings. Because community groups often use County meeting rooms and other space during non-business hours, the CUPF emergency hotline is critical for this agency's successful operations.

Montgomery County Public Libraries (MCPL) recently established a hotline to provide updated information on unexpected closings or other scheduling changes. Recorded information on this hotline covers all library branches and is updated as needed. This hotline is accessible at all hours. MCPL also maintains a reference service for customers to instantly obtain information on a broad variety of subjects. The Ask-a-Librarian reference service is available by telephone at (240) 777-0001 (TTY 777-0902) or through the internet by live chat or via email.

The live chat reference is available to customers through the County's website. This service, called AskUsNow!, is a 24/7 live online interactive service which provides the expertise of librarians to provide residents and students with answers to questions, research guidance and help navigating the Internet. Customers may be connected with a librarian in one of 26 public, academic or special libraries around Maryland or elsewhere in the United States.

MCPL also provides an email reference service for customers to send an email inquiry for answers to brief factual questions, information about library services or how to proceed with more complex research. Customers send the email question and in most instances receive an email reply the next business day. AskUsNow! and email reference are available through www.montgomerycountymd.gov/library.

The Board of Elections maintains a 24 hour hotline to provide information on voter registration, requests for address changes, absentee ballots, becoming an election judge and other services relating to elections. During business hours, callers have the option to be transferred to a staff member.

The Department of Public Works and Transportation (DPWT) currently maintains two hotlines. Callers to (240) 777-7165 can leave a message on issues regarding solid waste, recycling, graffiti, Ride On buses, taxi regulation and maintenance relating to County owned buildings. Messages are cleared daily and directed to the appropriate office for callback. DPWT's second hotline (240) 777-6000 allows callers to speak with a staff member during business hours regarding the Operations area of DPWT, which include highway maintenance, parking, traffic lights and traffic engineering.

The Department of Recreation maintains a general information hotline that provides telephone numbers for administrative offices, team sports, recreation centers, aquatics centers and other Recreation facilities.

Finally, the County Executive's Office maintains an Information and Referral line that is staffed during business hours. The County Executive's Office can also be reached during business hours to provide assistance. Following is a list of hotlines for departments and agencies.

Department	Hotline Number
Community Use of Public Facilities	(240) 777-2727
County Executive's Office	(240) 777-2500
County Executive's Information and Referral Line	(240) 777-1000
Elections, Board of	(240) 777-VOTE (-8683)
Fire and Rescue Service	911 for emergencies
Health and Human Services	(240) 777-1245
Police	911 for emergencies
Police	(301) 279-8000 for non-emergencies
Public Libraries	(240) 777-6500
Public Libraries Ask-a-Librarian Reference	(240) 777-0001 (also through website)
Public Works and Transportation	(240) 777-7165 to leave a message
Public Works and Transportation	(240) 777-6000 staffed for operations issues M-F 7 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Recreation	(240) 777-6804

Office of Community Outreach Events

The County Executive's Office of Community Outreach is sponsoring or hosting a number of upcoming events to recognize the diverse communities in the County. All events are open to the public at no cost and will take place in the Executive Office Building (EOB), 101 Monroe Street, Rockville. More information is available by calling (240) 777-2500.

Arab American Heritage Month – April 4 at 6:30 p.m. on the Terrace Level of the EOB. See article on Page 1.

Muslim Women in the Arts — Display of works created by women artists who were inspired by Islamic culture. Artworks will be displayed in the Lobby Gallery of the EOB through the end of April. Reception and artist discussion is scheduled for 6:30 p.m. on Monday, April 10 in the EOB Lobby Auditorium.

Understanding Diversity Through Art – Over 100 students from 16 County middle schools responded to a call to create artworks depicting the theme "My Proud Culture." Come see these works displayed in the EOB cafeteria during the month of May. A reception to honor the students, their families and teachers is scheduled for Wednesday, May 10 at 6:30 p.m. in the EOB cafeteria. Awards will also be presented to the best entries from each school and for Best of Show on May 10. The awarded works will be displayed during June at the BlackRock Center for the Arts, 12901 Town Commons Drive, Germantown. Call (301) 528-2260 for more information on the June exhibit.

Asian American Health Disparities Conference – On May 5, the Asian American Health Initiative will sponsor a conference to address community health disparities. Certain communities face a higher susceptibility to certain diseases because of genetics, diet, cultural practices, treatment options and other factors. Come learn more about these disparities and how to reduce these disparities for you, your family, neighbors and friends. Conference is from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Pooks Hill Marriott, 5151 Pooks Hill Road, Bethesda. There is no charge but registration is required by April 14 by calling (240) 777-4515 or visiting www.aahiinfo.org.

Asian Pacific American Heritage Month – To commemorate the 25th Anniversary of the recognition of Asian Pacific American Heritage Month, the Office of Community Outreach and the Maryland Soccerplex are co-sponsoring a day long festival with food, entertainment, cultural exhibits, vendor booths and fun for the whole family on Saturday, May 20 at the Soccerplex, 18031 Central Park Circle, Germantown. Call Mr. Mihir Patel at (301) 528-1480 or visit www.mdsoccerplex.org. To kick off the event

Fannie Mae – photo display of children in foster care up for adoption. EOB Cafeteria in April.

Juneteenth — Tuesday, June 13, 2006 Celebration of Juneteenth. BlackRock Center for the Arts, Germantown. Call Tina Clarke at (240) 777-2523 for more information.

Office of Community Outreach
Offices of County Executive Douglas M. Duncan
101 Monroe Street
Rockville, Maryland 20850

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GilchristCenter for Cultural Diversity

Gilchrist Center for Cultural Diversity

Montgomery County's Charles W. Gilchrist Center for Cultural Diversity offers many free classes, events, seminars and programs. Topics include:

- Immigration and citizenship
- Small business development
- Tax assistance
- Free health screening
- How to use a computer and the internet
- How to find a job and write a resume
- Drug and alcohol prevention
- Free legal help on civil cases.

Please call (240) 777-4940 or visit the website www.montgomerycountymd.gov for more information and class schedules. The link to the Gilchrist Center is on the County's homepage.

The Gilchrist Center is located at 11319 Elkin Street in Wheaton, near University Boulevard, and can be reached by public transportation. The Germantown satellite office of the Gilchrist Center is located in the Upcounty Regional Services Center at 12900 Middlebrook Road, Germantown.